

**Town of Belmont
Capital Budget Committee
Belmont Town Hall, Room 2
Thursday evening, October 20, 2005, 7:30 p.m.**

Mrs. Brusch called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. All the members of the Committee were present, John Bowe, M. Patricia Brusch, Mark F. Clark, John Conte, Jennifer M. Fallon, Angelo Firenze, except Anne Marie Mahoney, who joined the meeting before the commencement of any business. Also present were Barbara Hagg, Town Accountant and staff liaison to the Capital Budget Committee; Thomas Younger, Town Administrator; Jeffrey Conti, Assistant Town Administrator; and Karen Pressy, Chairman of the Belmont Senior Citizen Building Committee.

Mrs. Brusch began by introducing Ms. Fallon, who had been unable to attend the previous meeting. Mrs. Brusch then turned to the articles involving capital items that appear on the warrant for the Special Town Meeting called for the following Monday (October 24, 2005).

Special Town Meeting Agenda
(Item 2 on Committee Agenda)
Senior Center

Mrs. Brusch called on Mrs. Pressey to present the authorization of Senior Center construction which is Article 7 on the Special Town Meeting warrant. Mrs. Pressey, referring to a letter that she had sent to Town Meeting Members dated October 17, 2005, summarized the costs associated with the Senior Center proposal (as set forth in a cost estimate dated October 14, 2005, by Catlin Architecture which had been sent with Mrs. Pressey's letter). The total cost is \$6,453,456, less the \$125,000 already appropriated for design, resulting in a net additional cost of \$6,328,456. This is the next project in line for completion according to the megagroup meeting. During the discussion of costs, Mr. Younger confirmed that the inclusion of bonding costs is appropriate.

The discussion included a report on efforts to raise money for the Center from private donors and efforts to obtain a favorable vote for the project in the town-wide debt-exclusion election November 14, as well as a description of the physical Center as it is currently planned. Mrs. Pressey pointed out that the current plan is to move the existing Council on Aging programs into the new building, including a full-time custodian who is already budgeted. The current Council on Aging costs are less than 1% of the Town's operating budget. There will be no additional cost to the Town. The building will be LEED certified, recognizing its sustainable design, including a geothermal AC system. At the conclusion of the discussion, Mr. Younger read an amendment to the currently proposed motion under Article 7 which he said would be offered at the Special Town Meeting. The purpose of the amendment was to ensure that all private contributions received before the bond issue is authorized under the article would be used to reduce the amount of the bond issuance. Mrs. Brusch pointed out that donations for particular items, increasing or improving the furniture or equipment available to the Senior Center, could be made to a pre-existing fund. Mr. Clark indicated

that he would vote in favor of the motion offered under Article 7 if the amendment is offered but otherwise he would vote against the motion currently offered under Article 7. He further explained that he feels that a new library is needed before a new senior center and the currently proposed senior center is to be located in the wrong place. At the least, now that the Town owns all of the property on the north side of Concord Avenue, he feels that the entire matter of a new senior center and a new library, and their locations, should be reinvestigated. He explained that he would vote in favor of an amended motion under Article 7 because he would not stand in the way of a new senior center if the voters approve the debt exclusion proposed on November 14.

Mrs. Brusch first called for a vote on the proposed amendment. Upon motion duly made and seconded, the Committee voted unanimously in favor of the proposed amendment. Mrs. Brusch called for a vote under the motion currently offered under Article 7. Upon motion duly made and seconded to recommend the currently proposed motion under Article 7, the vote was six in favor with one (Mr. Clark) voting no. Mrs. Brusch then called for a vote on the current motion with the proposed amendment. This time, upon motion duly made and seconded, the vote was unanimously in favor of recommending the motion as amended.

Woodfall Road

Mrs. Brusch next introduced the proposal to sell property of the Town near Woodfall Road. This proposal is Articles 3 and 4 on the warrant for the Special Town Meeting. Article 3 concerns a proposed land swap with the Belmont Country Club and Article 4 concerns the sale of the resulting parcels by the Town. The proposal was presented by Mr. Firenze. The Committee had discussed the proposal at its previous meeting, and was only awaiting a definitive agreement between the Selectmen and the Belmont Country Club. Mr. Firenze reported that the Selectmen had reached an agreement with the Belmont Country Club, the principal points of which had been set forth in outline form in a Term Sheet that had been previously circulated to members of the Committee. Mr. Clark had observed that the definition of “development parcels” under those terms was somewhat uncertain. Mr. Firenze pointed out that the definition would be clarified in the definitive agreement. Upon a motion duly made and seconded, it was voted unanimously to recommend favorable action on the motion to be offered under Article 3. Upon motion duly made and seconded, a motion to recommend favorable action on the motion under Article 4 also was voted unanimously.

Sale of Downtown Fire Station

The proposal to sell the Central Fire Station is Article 5 on the warrant for the Special Town Meeting. At its last meeting, the Committee called for a specification of the conditions for the RFP (request for proposals) under which the Selectmen proposed to sell the fire station. Part of the discussion of the Committee was devoted to agreeing on how to refer to the various versions of those conditions that had been circulated prior to the meeting. Before the most recent Warrant Committee meeting, the Selectmen had circulated a version of proposed terms that came to be called version 1. At the most

recent Warrant Committee meeting, a new version of those terms, amended from version 1, was presented orally. That version was now available in writing to the Capital Budget Committee, and was referred to in its discussion as version 2. Mrs. Brusch explained that at the most recent Warrant Committee meeting, version 2 was rejected by a vote of 12 to 3. Thereafter, the Board of Selectmen and the Warrant Committee continued to discuss the Warrant Committee's concerns.

As a result of that discussion, the Board of Selectmen now offered a version 3. Version 3 contains all the provisions of version 2 and adds a provision according to which a successful purchaser of the Central Fire Station could appeal to the Board of Selectmen any decision of the Historic District Commission with which the purchaser disagrees.

Messrs. Younger and Firenze reported concerning the development of versions 2 & 3 and highlighted the principal provisions that were now contained in them. The provisions included a provision that, even though offered for sale now, the station will not be turned over to the successful purchaser until it is no longer needed to house the Fire Department; that oversight of any redevelopment of the Central Fire Station be by the Historic District Commission, using the Secretary of the Interior's regulations concerning historic redevelopment; that these historic restrictions will apply not only to the exterior of the hose tower and the façade but also the sides and the roof, but it is clear that the more recent addition at the back of the Central Fire Station may be torn down; that a residential use may be permitted on the second floor but none on the first floor; that the winning bidder need not have prior expertise in historic redevelopment if a member of his proposed development team has such expertise; that a recommendation concerning the winning bidder will be made to the Board of Selectmen by the Belmont Center Planning Group after receiving advice from the Town Administrator and the Community Development Office. Mr. Firenze noted, and members of the Committee emphasized, the importance of the requirement that the winning bidder propose to increase the diversity of commercial activity in Belmont Center. As previously noted, version 3 adds an appeal from the Historic District Commission to the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Firenze completed his report by noting that a motion under Article 5 will require a two-third's vote at the Special Town Meeting.

Mrs. Brusch reported that Paul Solomon, Chairman of the Board of Selectmen, would like the Committee to vote on both version 2 and version 3. Furthermore, Selectman Brownsberger is unwilling to take the Historic District Commission out of a role in the redevelopment decision. Mr. Firenze indicated that he is planning to meet with the Historic District Commission to see if the historic restrictions can be limited to the exterior of the hose tower and the façade of the Central Fire Station. Upon motion duly made and seconded, the Committee voted unanimously to recommend to the Special Town Meeting unfavorable action on version 2. Upon further motion duly made and seconded, the Committee voted four in favor, none against, with three abstentions, to recommend version 3 to the Special Town Meeting for favorable action. The three persons who abstained from that vote were Mrs. Brusch and Messrs. Clark and Conte. Each of them indicated that she or he would have voted in favor of the motion if version

3 could be revised to eliminate the historic restrictions on the sides of the Central Fire Station.

Megagroup

(Item 3 on Committee Agenda)

Mrs. Brusch reported that under Article 1, the Warrant Committee would report to the Special Town Meeting concerning the Town's finances and this report will include a discussion of some of the so-called mega projects facing the Town. During the ensuing discussion, Mr. Clark iterated his position that the Town's priorities should be re-examined now that the Town owns all of the property on the north side of Concord Avenue. The so-called megagroup process is expected to continue with a meeting in December. The last of the current fire stations (Fairview Avenue) will have to be disposed of. There is a general understanding that if the debt exclusion vote for the Senior Center on November 14 fails, other projects in the queue should not wait.

Prior Projects

(Item 5 on the Committee Agenda)

Ms. Hagg distributed to the members of the Committee a spreadsheet pertaining to previously approved capital projects. That spreadsheet is captioned "Town of Belmont, Capital Project Balances 9/19/05, by Department", and indicates the remaining balances for each earlier appropriation. Mrs. Brusch explained that even "completed" capital projects can be an issue because the leftover appropriation balances cannot be reallocated by departmental action alone. From time to time, the Town must consolidate and reappropriate those sums. Furthermore, some departments fail to expend older appropriations and spend new appropriations for capital items before older ones are spent. Mrs. Brusch has asked departments to spend the earlier appropriations first. During her remarks, Mrs. Brusch reported that the High School has replaced its generator and Ms. Fallon reported that the pool filtration system will be renovated in March of 2006.

Following a discussion of the Committee's schedule for next spring (see below), the Committee returned to a discussion of the annual capital budget. Mr. Firenze summarized the situation regarding Town streets. The Town's current cost per square foot for road rebuilding is \$82.00. The Town's streets are currently rated at a 47. The minimum level for routine maintenance is 72. In order to get up to a 72, the Town would have to spend \$5 million a year for the next 20 years. The decision to install granite curbing and replace sidewalks when streets are rebuilt means that the Town is doing much less road work with the budgeted amount than originally contemplated. Police details, design, storm water drainage issues and cost to interface with adjacent properties, were not a part of the original budget estimates for pavement management and actually account for a significant part of the monies spent.

Mr. Conte expressed the view that police cruisers, which are routinely replaced on a three one-year/two the-next-year basis should be part of the operating budget, not the capital budget. A consensus quickly developed among the Committee that the same should be true of the routine replacement of computers, although new initiatives in computer software and hardware might remain capital projects.

FY '07 Budget Schedule for this Committee
(Item 4 on Committee Agenda)

Mrs. Brusch outlined her proposal for the Committee's meetings prior to the Annual Town Meeting. First, she has asked department heads to prepare their capital budgets at the same time they are preparing their operating budgets. The Warrant Committee is asking that the operating budgets be ready by the first week in January. Mrs. Brusch is proposing that each meeting of the Committee at which department heads will appear begin at 6:00 p.m. and no department head be asked to appear after 9:30 p.m. Mrs. Brusch also indicated that she proposes to schedule department heads so that each one only need appear at a Committee meeting once. Mr. Bowe suggested that questions could be sent to department heads before meetings so that the Committee could be familiar with the projects they propose. Mr. Conte suggested that department heads be asked to prioritize their projects before they appear at Committee meetings. Mrs. Brusch observed that the School Department always prioritizes its capital requests, but general town departments rarely do unless prompted.

After some discussion, the following dates were established for meetings with department heads:

February 16, 2006 at 6:00 p.m.
March 2, 2006 at 6:00 p.m.
March 16, 2006 at 6:00 p.m.
March 30, 2006, time to be determined
April 6, 2006, time also to be determined.

[Following the meeting, Ms. Hagg arranged rooms. The meeting on March 30 will be in Room 4 of the Town Hall. All other meetings will be in Room 1 of the Town Hall.]

Accept Minutes of Meeting 9/29/05
(Item 1 on Committee Agenda)

As the Committee was moving toward adjournment, Mr. Bowe reminded the Committee that it had not yet acted on the draft minutes for its most recent meeting (9/29/05). Upon motion duly made and seconded, the draft minutes, revised with headings as Mr. Bowe has suggested, were approved unanimously.

Other
(Item 6 on Committee Agenda)

Ms. Hagg distributed an agenda and a spreadsheet showing the names of and other information about the members of the Committee. Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously voted to commend Michael Speidel and thank him for his service to this Committee and to the Town.

Thereupon, at 9:58 p.m., the Committee adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark F. Clark, Secretary